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LETTER DATED 12 NOVEMBER 1999 FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to convey the attached communication, dated 11 November 1999 (see annex), which I have received from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its annex to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(Signed) Kofi A. ANNAN

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Annex

Letter dated 11 November 1999 from the Permanent Representative of Australia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolution 1264 (1999) of 15 September 1999, I attach the fourth periodic report on the operations of the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET) (see appendix). I would appreciate your making the report available to the Security Council.

(Signed) Penny WENSLEY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Appendix

Fourth periodic report to the United Nations on the operations of the International Force, East Timor

27 October to 10 November 1999

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In the period since the last report to the Security Council, the International Force, East Timor (INTERFET) has consolidaced its control over the entire territory of East Timor. The main challenge to INTERFET progress throughout its deployment has been the hostile activity of militia groups. The continuing resolve shown by INTERFET in countering the militia, combined with the steadily declining support offered by elements of Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI), has now succeeded in deterring and undermining militia activity. While this situation remains, it is very unlikely that the militia will be able to pose a significant continuing threat to the security of East Timor, though it is possible that the militias could re-emerge as a low-level threat. In summary, INTERFET has made very significant progress in restoring peace and security to East Timor.

2. The main challenges for the remainder of 1999 are humanitarian: the return of internally displaced persons to East Timor (particularly from West Timor), their successful reintegration into East Timorese society and the commencement of reconstruction. The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) has the primary responsibility in meeting these challenges: INTERFET has a supporting role, within its force capabilities. For INTERFET, the focus moves to preparing for an early transition to a United Nations peacekeeping operation, without any degradation in peace and security.

II. COOPERATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF INDONESIA

3. Throughout the reporting period, INTERFET dealings with Indonesian authorities, including TNI, have continued to be cordial and cooperative.

4. The remaining TNI contingent and Indonesian Government task force officials withdrew from East Timor on 31 October.

5. On 29 October, INTERFET, TNI and the Polisi Republik Indonesia (POLRI) completed a joint report on the 10 October shooting incident at Motaain (see S/1999/1052, S/1999/1055 and S/1999/1072, para. 14). The report has been forwarded to the Secretary-General. It contains a range of recommendations for preventing accidental or unintentional encounters between INTERFET and TNI/POLRI in border regions. It also recommends that the United Nations and Indonesia reach agreement on the land and maritime boundaries separating East and West Timor, including the enclave. Discussions on these issues have taken place between INTERFET and TNI officers at the local level, although these have been

hampered by the absence of direct contact between the Commander of INTERFET and his Indonesian counterpart.

6. Following Indonesia's declaration that East Timor was no longer part of Indonesia, INTERFET notified the Government of Indonesia on 2 November that it would commence aerial reconnaissance flights by RF-111 aircraft over East Timor to provide an accurate assessment of infrastructure damage and to verify the accuracy of INTERFET maps. The first flights took place on 5 and 7 November.

7. TNI has confirmed that the INTERFET status of forces arrangement providing for sea and air access to the Oecussi enclave remains in force now that the enclave has passed from Indonesian control. The Government of Indonesia does not place any restrictions on, or seek diplomatic clearances for, air and sea travel via designated routes between East Timor and the Oecussi enclave (and Atauro Island).

8. Support for militias by TNI elements has continued to decline throughout the period of the report, and INTERFET welcomes this. There are some indications that militia groups are redirecting their efforts to the political sphere.

9. Indonesia has established its own inquiry into possible crimes and human rights abuses in East Timor (the "Komnasham Inquiry") and has sought the cooperation of UNTAET and INTERFET in conducting investigations in East Timor. Discussions on this issue are continuing.

III. PROGRESS AGAINST THE MANDATE OF INTERFET

10. INTERFET includes forces from 17 countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Malaysia, New Zealand, Norway, the Philippines, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America. Contingents from Denmark and Kenya will deploy before the end of November, and a number of other countries are finalizing arrangements to deploy after that. The total number of INTERFET personnel in East Timor as at 10 November was over 9,400 (approximately 5,300 Australians and 4,100 other nationals).

11. There have been no significant security incidents in East Timor since the last report. INTERFET troops have continued to conduct patrols, staff checkpoints and escort convoys and facilitate humanitarian operations.

12. Dili continues to show signs of stability and a return to life as normal. More than 70,000 displaced residents have returned, bringing the city's population to roughly half its pre-ballot level. Refugees are now returning to Dili from West Timor and other parts of East Timor, but also from other parts of Indonesia and from Darwin, Australia. Work on rebuilding the city's infrastructure has begun. The lack of suitable accommodations, resulting from the post-ballot destruction, remains an impediment to the return of more displaced residents. The onset of the wet season has reinforced the urgent need for camp accommodation and construction stores. INTERFET and the East Timor Public Works Department are jointly coordinating the cleaning out of the main

drains in Dili. The quality of health and sanitation will remain of concern over the coming months.

13. In the eastern districts, Thai forces based at Baucau and Viqueque, Philippines forces based at Manatuto and Laclubar, and Korean forces based at Los Palos have consolidated their security presence and expanded their humanitarian and civic action activities.

14. INTERFET forces in the west have maintained a high tempo of border patrols, despite deteriorating road conditions with the onset of the wet season. The New Zealand, Canadian and Irish contingents have expanded their operations into the border area of Kova Lima district and the neighbouring Ainaro district. At the local level, INTERFET and TNI are working together to institute appropriate local arrangements for border management, including for the transfer of displaced East Timorese.

15. INTERFET has also consolidated its presence throughout the Oecussi enclave. The militia threat against the enclave is greater than the threat against other parts of East Timor, but it is still assessed as being low. INTERFET, UNTAET and TNI have agreed that the mass return of displaced East Timorese from West Timor into the enclave is a high priority, and INTERFET anticipates a steady increase in the number of returnees. INTERFET will deploy additional elements into the enclave to ensure that the stable security environment is not affected by a large influx of East Timorese. These additional forces will conduct patrols and assist with the provision of humanitarian aid.

16. INTERFET estimates that there are between 150,000 and 200,000 displaced East Timorese remaining in West Timor. The Government of Indonesia has indicated that those wishing to return to East Timor should be able to do so. Militia intimidation in the refugee camps continues, but TNI appears to be moving to counter this. Informal liaison between INTERFET and TNI commanders along the East Timor-West Timor border and the borders of the Oecussi enclave has led to the negotiation of border crossings for some displaced persons. This is expected to continue on an ad hoc basis until a broad blanket agreement is reached between INTERFET and TNI for border crossing. INTERFET and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) sponsored transportation of displaced persons by sea and air is continuing. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs predicts that the successful return of refugees by land could cause far greater numbers of displaced persons to attempt land crossings without direct INTERFET support.

17. INTERFET understands that UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration have not been advised by the Indonesian authorities of all refugee camps in West Timor and only have access to some camps. It is imperative that these organizations have access to all camps to expedite the return of displaced persons to East Timor so as to minimize the impact of the relocation on the local infrastructure. Within the limits of its force capability, INTERFET is working with UNHCR to achieve this goal, with the cooperation of the Government of Indonesia.

18. With the restoration of peace and security in East Timor, the majority of INTERFET forces are now conducting activities more aligned with a policing function than the military tasks outlined in the mandate of INTERFET.

IV. TRANSITION TO UNTAET

19. The appointment of Sergio Vieira de Mello as Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Transitional Administrator for East Timor has given impetus to planning for UNTAET. It is warmly welcomed by INTERFET. His anticipated arrival in East Timor in mid-November will be an important milestone in the transition process.

20. Since the adoption of Security Council resolution 1272 (1999) on 25 October, UNTAET has established a presence in Dili and started to develop relationships with INTERFET and with the East Timorese, including leaders of the National Council of Timorese Resistance. UNTAET relations with INTERFET have been productive and cooperative.

21. With the continued success of INTERFET, conditions are moving towards the point where the transition to a peacekeeping operation under UNTAET can take place. Australia, as the leading contributor to INTERFET, and the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations have agreed that the preferred transition period is mid-January. The Commander of INTERFET advises that, on the basis of current and anticipated security conditions, this date is reasonable.

22. To achieve a timely transition to a United Nations peacekeeping operation, it is important that the planning process be accelerated. INTERFET would welcome the early deployment of the advance headquarters of the peacekeeping operation and early discussions between UNTAET and INTERFET on the conditions for and requirements of the transition.

23. The early appointment of the senior leadership of the peacekeeping operation, including the Force Commander, will also facilitate an early transition date and assist the United Nations efforts to secure firm commitments of forces from contributing countries.

24. A transition in January-February roughly accords with the resources available from the INTERFET Trust Fund to sustain non-self-funding INTERFET contingents. Delay beyond this period would necessitate additional Trust Fund contributions. This further underscores the importance of an early transition.

V. OUTLOOK

25. INTERFET has made significant progress in restoring peace and security throughout East Timor in advance of a January transition to an UNTAET peacekeeping operation. Future operations will facilitate further improvements in the overall security and humanitarian situation. INTERFET has successfully marginalized the militias and their capacity to threaten the safety of the East Timorese people.

26. In view of the increasingly benign security environment, the focus of attention should now turn to improving the humanitarian situation in East Timor, facilitating the return of internally displaced persons, expanding and deepening the UNTAET presence and ensuring an early transition to a peacekeeping operation.